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ABSTRACT

A brief description of the country of Venezuela (geography, population, economy, internal communications, and politics) and its educational system introduce a description of the Universidad Nacional Abierta (UNA). The UNA was opened in July 1978 to expand the national system of higher education by the use of distance learning techniques. These elements of the institution's history and operations are outlined and briefly described: origins in history and legislation; intended clientele; curriculum plan; course distribution; student admission, registration, and records; regional resource centers and facilities; student examinations; administration and organization (including governance, policy formation, academic units, financial control, and educational research); staff; and budget. Appended are maps of population distribution in the country and the proposed regional network of the university, and charts illustrating the course and credit structure and the management structure. (MSE)

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THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND SERVICES

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL ABIERTA

A Case Study in Distance Learning Systems

THE UNIVERSIDAD NACTIONAL ABIERTA OF VENEZUELA (UNA)

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H.Z. Friedman
CICS, November 1978

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Universidad Nacional Abierta, Venezuela

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PART A : THE COUNTRY

Geography

1 The Republic of Venezuela is situated on the northern tip of the South American continent; its area is a little over 350 thousand square miles. To the north it is bounded by the Caribbean Sea, by Guyana to the east, Brazil to the south and Colombia to the west. The Caribbean coastline is 2,000 miles in extent.

2 There are four geographical regions:

* the coastal zone
* the Andean highlands
* the Central plain of the Llanos
* the Guyana highlands

3 The coastal zone is a narrow tropical belt broadening into the Maracaibo basin to the west and the Orinoco delta to the east. This area contains 18% of the population, with a high proportion of Venzuelans of Caribbean descent. Secondary products are cocoa, bananas and fish, but dominating all other Venezuelan products is oil from the Maracaibo basin. With a population of 800,000 Maracaibo town is the second largest in Venezuela. The oil industry was nationalised in 1976.

4 Geographically the smallest of the four regions but the largest in terms of population and commercial activity is the Andean highlands. Between 3,000 and 6,000 feet is a temperate zone in which are found the major centres of population, excepting Maracaibo. In this area are the capital city Caracas (population 2.5 million) the centre of government, commerce and finance, Valencia (366,000) the agricultural centre, Barquisimeto (334,000) and Maracay (154,000).

5 Across the width of Venezuela, from the foothills of the Andes to the Guyana highlands, stretch the great central Llanos plains. This tropical area is very sparcely populated.

6 The Guyana highlands occupy some 45% of Venezuelan territory, but contain only 2% of population. Rich deposits of minerals and iron are slowly being exploited.

Population

7 With a growth rate of over 3%, Venezuela has one of the world's fastest growing populations. Table 1 illustrates:

Table 1. Population Growth

Year	Population
1950	5,035,000
1961	7,524,000
1971	10,778,000
1976 (est.)	13,000,000

8 A consequence of this rapid growth rate is that Venezuela has a young population relative to nations with older technologies; 44% is uder age 15 and a further 21% under age 25.

9 Population geographic distribution is very uneven, and rapid urbanisation is taking place. In 1950 about 50% of population lived in urban areas; the figure now is 75%. Caracas has doubled its population since the 1960s, despite geographical factors restricting its physical expansion. Some 90% of Venezuelans now live in the Andean highlands and the Maracaibo area, while the vast central and southern areas are very sparcely populated.

10 The language and roots of Venezuelan society are Spanish, but its population is very mixed. Over two thirds of Venezuelans are Mestizos, products of aboriginal Indian, European and Caribbean Negro ancestry. See table 2.

Table 2. Racial dispersion and proportions

Race	%	Dispersion
Mestizo	69	all areas
White	20	major urban centres
Negros	9	coastal zone
Indians	2	Guyana highlands

11 As one of the most wealthy and stable of the South American republics, Venezuela attracts large numbers of permanent and temporary immigrants, from other South American republics in particular. A high proportion of Venezuelan residents are thus 'foreigners', and are identified as such by their cedula (identity card).

The economy

12 The discovery of oil reserves of commercial potential in the Maracaibo basin in 1921 has brought about a revolution in economic and social activity. Two prime factors constitute this revolution:

(a) the country's economy has been transformed from an agrarian one into one dependent on mineral exports and industry.

(b) this has weakened the influence of the established and wealthy landowning class, and, via periods of political instability, has facilitated movement towards greater liberalism and egalitarianism in government.

13 Venezuela's oil has made her a wealthy country, with a hard and respected currency. With oil revenues, an extensive programme of public works and industrial development has been commissioned - the former including road building, airports, irrigation schemes, hospitals, housing and schools. Among the latter, steel and petro-chemicals predominate. Smaller scale distributed industrial production of consumer goods is also being encouraged to provide employment and reduce the national dependency on oil exports. Development of communication technology is now of high priority.

14 While the first phase of economic growth has been from agriculture to the export of raw materials, the second phase, from raw materals export to industrialized production, is now under way. The country is still very dependent on its oil exports, and governments are aware of the urgent need to progressively reduce this dependency by exploiting their rich mineral reserves themselves. There is thus powerful internal pressure to become self-sufficient in manufacturing technologies and in the management of production.

Internal Communications

15 Roads between the major cities of the Andean highlands are mostly very good, but they are much less good in other remoter parts of the country, though improving. Most large towns are also served by scheduled air routes. Petrol, not surprisingly, is very cheap, and, despite the high cost of car purchase, car ownership is widespread, especially in the wealthier urban areas. Taxis are also very numerous in most towns, and inexpensive, relative to European taxi travel. There are no public railways in operation.

16 Venezuela has a well-developed internal system of posts, telephones and telex, but the service is unreliable. By and large, local government and town planning facilities have lagged behind the growth of urbanization. One consequence of this can be seen in the underdeveloped system of residence identification. Direct delivery of mails to individual households hardly exists, and widespread use is made of Apartado (P.O. Box) numbers.

17 There are over 40 daily newspapers nationally, although only four have circulations of 100,000 or more, with half the country's daily newspaper circulation being concentrated on Caracas. Most newspapers have small circulations and little penetration outside their locality. The total circulation figure of all dailies is less than a million.

18 If newspapers fail to reach the mass of Venezuelans, the cinema, radio and television attract large audiences. Although numbers are declining, there are still about 450 cinemas in Venezuela, with weekly admission totals approaching a million. The government radio network Radio Nacional de Venezuela covers the country with 8 MW, 11 SW and 2 FM transmitters, while some 140 local commercial radio stations are in operation. Over 50% of broadcast time on these commercial stations is occupied by advertising. Television too is heavily infiltrated by advertising - most broadcasting is by a small number of private commercial companies. Although these networks are obliged to give some time to educational and cultural broadcasting, the main source of serious television is the government Televisora Nacional network, though the coverage of TVN is restricted to the Caracas metropolitan area.

Politics

19 Venezuela can now be regarded as a stable democracy, with two major centralist parties competing for power. However, extremist elements of the left and right remain strong, particularly among certain groups of high political motivation, such as students. With a recent history of political violence, the threat posed by such extremism remains a significant fact of political life.

PART B : THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Educational dynamics

1 Rapid population growth has naturally forced the educational system to expand. However, there are several keys to understanding the dynamics of Venezuelan education today:

(a) relative to most other national demographics, an exceptionally high proportion of Venezuelans are of school or university age

(b) government policy is to encourage the growth of democracy and social mobility through education

(c) during the long periods of dictatorships, pressure for education was resisted

(d) there is an increasing demand for home produced technologists to further industrial development.

Administration

2 Educational planning is the function of the Directorate of Planning (formerly called EDUPLAN). The Directorate is currently working closely with CORDIPLAN (Central Office of Co-ordination and Planning) to realize the first national Educational Plan of 1976-80.

3 Overall responsibility rests with the Ministry of Education, but the 23 federal states governments take over at the detailed level. The Ministry system of control tends towards centralization over matters such as curriculum structure, teacher training and accreditation and the approval of examinations. Private education is also controlled by the Ministry, being entirely free from state intervention only in matters of internal management. However, under a progressive policy of regionalization, it is intended to give increasing autonomy to authorities based on the federal states' administrations.

4 The central government provides most of the authority in education. It also provides most of the money (84% in 1970). Public expenditure on education as a proportion of GNP has increased substantially in recent years. Table 3 illustrates:

Table 3. Educational expenditure as a proportion of GNP

Year	% of GNP
1960	16.67
1974	24.34

5 Within this amount, the proportion absorbed by higher education has been increasing at the expense of lower levels:

Table 4. Proportion of education budget spent on HE and primary

Year	% HE	% Primary
1970	35.6	37.4
1974	40.1	28.8

However, the amount spent on primary education has greatly increased in this period.

Structure of the system - Primary Schools

6 Compulsory primary education begins at age 7, and a free six year course is provided. At the end of grade 6, children are examined to determine the award of a Primary Education Certificate which gives access to secondary education. All primary schools teach a uniform curriculum prescribed by the Ministry, and all teachers in primary schools must be registered with the Ministry.

7 Primary school enrolments have increased:

Table 5. Primary School Enrolments

Year	Enrolment
1965/6	1,459,000
1975/6	2,052,000

But the wastage rate remains high - only half actually complete their 6 year primary course. There were about 60,000 primary school teachers in the system in 1974.

Secondary Education

8 Despite the continuing high dropout rate from primary education, the volume of children coming through to the secondary level continues to increase, as does expenditure as a proportion of the total budget.

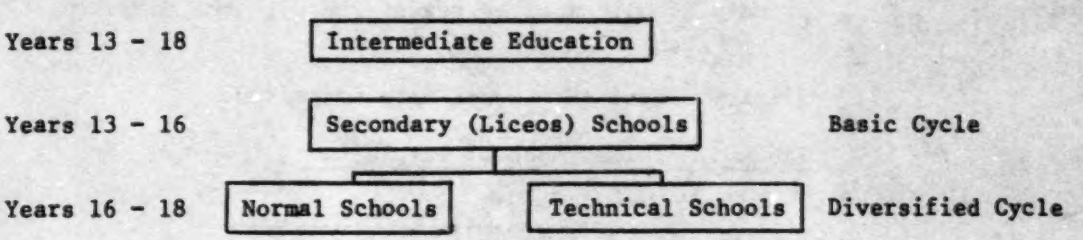
Table 6. Secondary School Enrolments

Year	Enrolment
1969/70	287,000
1975/76	690,000

Over 80% of these were in State schools. Again there is high wastage, estimated at 40%.

9 State secondary schools are characterised by large classes and dogmatic methods of teaching a strictly controlled syllabus. There is little opportunity for teacher and pupil to establish a personal relationship, and little thought given to encouraging creativity and initiative or discrimination and independence of thought. In general, the standard of equipment is not high.

10 Secondary education covers the period 13 to 18 years of age. It is structured as follows:



In this structure of 'intermediate' education, the three year 'basic cycle' is seen as a continuity of the primary period, so that all Venezuelan children, theoretically anyway, would have nine years of continuous education as a minimum.

11 Promotion from one year to the next in the basic cycle (and also the diversified cycle which follows) is dependent on average marks gained during the year (60%) and on an end of year exam (40%).

12 Specialization, for those children who remain in the education system, begins with the diversified cycle. There are three areas of study, called academic, technical and normal, this latter being for intending teachers. A two or three year course leads to the award of a bachillerato, which gives access to higher education. Until recent years only the academic branch led to the bachillerato and hence to

higher education, and this had the effect of channeling the nation's most able children into a restricted range of professions which, importantly, excluded the technological and managerial skills most needed by the country's economy. Even now, with the possibility of obtaining a bachillerato in technical education, there is still marked reluctance for able children to forsake the traditionally prestigeous academic course, and enrolment in the technical course (1973/4 figure) is about 23% of all diversified cycle enrolments. Of these 23%, about 10% take the industrial option. If we then apply the very high wastage rate (about 85% in the technical sector), only about one student in each 300 who enter this pre-University stage ever gets the necessary qualifications to study technology at University. Possession of a bachillerato confers a legal right to higher education, and the failure rate among those who stay the distance is small.

Higher education

13 Expansion in this area since the beginning of democratic stability in the 1950s and 1960s has been dramatic. The majority of Venezuela's institutes of higher education date from this period. There are now about 15 such institutes (excluding UNA) with enrolments as follows:

Table 7. HE Enrolments

Year	Enrolments
1968/9	71,378
1973/4	160,822

(It's significant that the Central University in Caracas has nearly 1/3rd of the total university population). Higher education consumes 60% of the total education budget, of which 82% goes to universities. (Again, UNA is excluded from these figures).

14 Like entrance to the diversified cycle, the problems of universities also originate from problems of input. Because of the high wastage rate throughout primary and secondary education - in which economic factors are particularly significant - entry to universities, despite the bachillerato, is unselective, hence the first year is a weeding out year, and thus the blight of high dropout is passed on to tertiary education.

15 No doubt the root of this wastage problem lies deep in Venezuela's past and present. Probable factors which contribute to it are:

(a) Public education - including university level - is free, but unsupported otherwise. Students at all levels must be maintained by their families until they graduate at age 23 or so. Venezuelan universities are not residential; students must compete for scarce and expensive living accommodation in cities.

(b) The economic argument can be continued. Venezuela has a growing middle class, but the distribution of wealth is such that for most Venezuelans education beyond the age of 13 or so is still a luxury. Although this may be no bad thing in itself, it does not, arguably, encourage foresight and patience.

(c) University courses normally last five years. Methods of teaching, as at secondary level, are dogmatic and impersonal, while the curriculum of most professional studies courses is inflexible and often overloaded. The student thus has little to maintain his motivation and little flexibility to change to another course.

(d) Partly on account of their non-residential character, perhaps, Venezuelan universities exhibit much less evidence of the development of student sports and socio-cultural activities than their European or North American counterparts. Student contact therefore tends to concentrate on political activity, and the prevalence and vehemence of such activity often interferes with students' studies.

16 The drive to produce more trained technologists has additional barriers to overcome. Naturally it takes trained technologists to reproduce their kind, but with uncompetitive academic salaries good technologists are unlikely to abandon the richer rewards of industry to teach in institutes of higher education. Technology teaching is thus poor compared with the traditional academic areas of medicine and law, both in quality and staffing levels. Not surprisingly, failure and dropout is therefore greatest in this area where the national need is greatest.

17 The nation's response to the problems of higher education have been various:

(a) During the 1970s some ten technological institutes were established by the government - the role of these appears to be the teaching of technology at a level below that of the universities (they give three-year courses of a more practical nature).

(b) A number of private universities have been established. Their students tend to be from the wealthier classes, and they are perhaps seen as an alternative to attending universities in Europe or North America.

(c) A number of new state universities have been established which, like the private ones, are 'experimental' in that they do not feel themselves constrained by the traditional pattern of the Central University. These new universities are all small, more selective on entry with higher standards among teachers as well as students, and limited teaching programmes emphasizing the sciences, technology and engineering. These experimental institutes (like Simon Bolivar University, which is currently adding residential accommodation to its campus) are already demonstrating that the devastatingly high wastage rate of traditional establishments can be reduced.

18 These expermimental institutes are also attacking the problem of the lack of professionalism in HE teaching. Few university teachers are full time academics with postgraduate qualifications. As a result, teaching methodology has received scant acknowledgement, while research has lanquished. In consequence libraries receive low priorities, and instruction emphasizes rote learning.

19 An experiment of particular relevance to this case study has been the development of part-time university studies. These have taken various forms. A number of universities, including the Central, Zulia and Simon Rodriguez, have programmes of "Supervized University Studies" (EUS) where working students study off-campus but under the guidance of University staff, and the similar "Free Studies" of the Simon Bolivar University. The Central Council for Universities (CNU) of the Ministry of Education has now created a commission to co-ordinate these activities.

Teacher training

20 Training for secondary teaching takes place at university schools of education, and four Institutos Pedagogicos. Training for primary teaching is separate, and is largely a female profession (90%). In neither area does supply meet demand, put at 6,000 new secondary teachers per year. The decade 1960 - 1970 produced only 5,342 new secondary teachers. However, by university standards, dropout rates of 25% are very favourable.

The education system: concluding points

21 It is evident that Venezuela's educational system is under attack from all sides. The demands of democracy, urbanization, industrialization and increasing social mobility are asking for more that the old system can provide - both in terms of quality and quantity. The simple answer so far has been to buy from abroad what cannot be home produced, but the shortsightedness of a policy which neglects to develop indigenous potential is being increasingly appreciated.

22 Possibly the greatest problem is the lack of trained personnel - both in their field and teaching it. The problem of producing the first generation of technologists to train succeeding ones has not yet been solved.

23 Qualification in Venezuelan society confers immediate prestige and a high salary. This factor is a two-edged sword, but wisely exploited it could be a powerful influence for progress.

PART C : UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL ABIERTA

1. Origins

1.1 The creation of a national university based on distance learning techniques thus came about within the context of an ailing and inadequate system of higher education and a growing climate of experimentation, particularly with part-time HE study such as EUS (see 19). The parallel experience and problems of other Latin American countries such as Costa Rica, Brazil and Colombia has naturally been significant in commending to Venezuela the idea of distance education.

1.2 In July of 1975 the Venezuelan government set up the Organizing Commission for UNA. In September 1976 the Commission reported with a feasibility study. In April 1977 the Commission was restructured, and charged with developing a plan for the establishment and general operation of the new university. This proposal (Proyecto) was presented to the CNU towards the end of 1977, and projected the start of teaching for mid July 1978. UNA was formally founded by Presidential Decree number 2161 on 27 September 1977.

2. Who For?

2.1 UNA sees as its target audience two quite different social groups. Since one purpose is to supplement existing HE provision, one audience will be secondary school leavers unable or unwilling to attend a campus university or other HE institute. Some of these students will be able to study full-time, some part-time if they have employment. Clearly, though, they will be home based, and spared the need to compete for accommodation in a university town.

2.2 A second objective is to provide for adult and continuing education. Venezuela's educational revolution is not simply about producing home-made technologists - its broader purpose is social and educational regeneration. Continuing education is seen as a vital contribution, and through UNA it will be available to Venezuelans of all ages who wish to study at home in their leisure time.

2.3 This second objective, however, is for the future. At present entry is restricted to:

(a) 'pre-inscribed' students - ie. students who have obtained their bachillerato, and having applied for university entrance through the CNU clearing procedures, have been allocated to UNA.

(b) 'open-entry' students - students who can provide evidence of obtaining their bachillerato, but who have applied independently and directly to UNA.

(c) members of the armed forces, as agreed between UNA and the military authorities.

For its first courses starting August 1978, UNA had enroled over 17,000 applicants. The great majority were pre-inscribed.

3. What Courses?

3.1 In selecting a teaching programme UNA's planners observed two guiding principles:

(a) UNA's course/curriculum structure was to be fully compatible and equivalent to that of conventional campuses, and

(b) science, technology and pedagogy were to be emphasized.

3.2 Initial planning proposed some eighteen specialized courses within 5 areas of study. These are set out in table 8 below.

Table 8. UNA: Initial study programme

Area of Study	Speciality	
Basic Sciences	Physics	
	Mathematics	*
Agricultural and Marine Sciences	Environmental engineering	
Engineering	Civil	
	Construction	
	Industrial	*
	Production	
	Systems	*
Education	Technical teaching	
	Physics & Mathematics	*
	Languages	
	Social Sciences	
	Pre-school education	*
	Education of children with learning problems	*
Social Sciences	Sociology: social work	
	Public administration	*
	Business administration	*
	Accountancy	*

3.3 Subsequent quantification of the implications of this programme for the early years of course production, led to a revised programme being proposed earlier this year. This revised programme reduces to nine the number of specialities to be available for the first year of professional studies (see 3.4) in 1980. However, the intention appears to remain of eventually implementing the full programme, but over a longer period of time than first envisaged. The first nine to be available are marked with an asterisk in table 8. (In Education, the physics and mathematics option will be mathematics only).

3.4 UNA undergraduate courses are structured into three levels:

1. Introductory Course (IC) one semester or trimester
2. General Studies (GS) two semesters (one year)
3. Professional or Specialist Studies (PS) 8 semesters.

The minimum time to graduate is thus about 5½ years. Post-graduate and Continuing education ('Extension') courses will also be offered in due course.

The Introductory Course

3.5 Before full registration as a student of UNA, applicants must complete and pass the introductory course. This has two divisions. Prior to commencing his studies, the applicant will take a number of diagnostic pretests, principally in Spanish language and mathematics. As a result of these pretests, special study modules are introduced into the introductory course to strengthen areas of weakness. The second division consists of three parts in which the applicant studies:

(a) a component of Environmental Studies

(b) a component of Institutional Information, to familiarize the aspiring student with the objectives and methods of UNA

(c) a component concerned with Study Skills relevant particularly to methods of self-study within a DLS environment.

On completion of this introductory semester (or trimester) the student takes one exam which he must pass to continue. The course may be repeated if it is failed.

General Studies

3.6 The UNA graduate will complete 15 courses in General Studies. The first 12 of these are taken during the first two semesters of Year 1 - ie. following completion of the IC. The remaining three are taken one each in the fourth, sixth and eighth semesters of study.

Professional Studies

3.7 Professional studies form the main substances of graduate studies, and imply an irreversible selection of speciality by the student. These studies terminate with a Licenciate in the area of speciality, though it is possible that courses for technologists may conclude at a lower ("intermediate") level. The professional studies course occupies a minimum of eight eighteen week semesters; this period can be increased by agreement according to the amount of time the student can give to his studies.

The Credit System

3.8 Progress towards graduation is measured by the collection of credits. Each subject or semester part has a credit value related to the notional amount of time required to complete it. One credit equals 36 hours of study (usually regarded as two hours per week over an 18 week semester) and most subjects are rated at two or three credits - ie. they require 72 or 108 hours to complete. Completion requires success in all assessments before the credits are awarded. The Introductory Course is zero rated for credits.

3.9 From the point at which they commence their General Studies, students - in conventional campuses anyway - are expected to achieve 15 credits worth of subjects per semester. In terms of a national workload this represents an average of 30 hours study a week - reasonable for a full-time student but clearly unlikely for those studying at weekends and in the evenings.

But if the full-time worker can study only 10 hours per week, will it take him 15 years to graduate? UNA has yet to find an answer to this question.

3.10 To obtain his Licenciate, the UNA student must accumulate 150 credits. He will take a minimum of 5 years to do this - no maximum has yet been specified. He will complete 39 credits in General Studies, and 111 in Professional Studies. Appendices 2 and 3 illustrate the credit structure and the details of subjects for the General Studies credits.

4. What Media and Methods?

4.1 UNA has expressed its intention to use all relevant forms of teaching media. Each subject will be composed of a number of self-instructional modules. This module forms the organizational unit of teaching. The module will contain:

(a) printed texts

(b) where appropriate, experimental equipment

(c) guide to self-assessment

(d) study guide

Radio and television programmes will be produced relating to each module. These will be broadcast nationwide using both state and commercial facilities. Copies of all broadcast material and equipment for replaying will be available at all local study centres. However, the printed text is regarded as the backbone of the instructional module and all other material essentially supportive.

5/6 Course Creation and Production

5/6.1 The course module is also the unit of course production. Modules are prepared by an instructional design team which consists of specialists in instructional design, the subject area (content specialist), assessment and in the use of media.

5/6.2 While this instructional design team plan the module, they do not actually produce it - production being delegated to subject specialist writers and media producers. The majority of these media producers and writers are contracted externally. Most course writing is done by external academics, and television/radio programmes produced by a number of small programme production companies.

5/6.3 Modules and the courses composed of them are very highly structured. Each module is intended to follow a predetermined model which includes a chronogram to assist the student organize his study of the unit, tests for self-evaluation and difficulty levels, post-tests, indications for remedial instruction, and so on. Modules are further subdivided into units of study, each with its own objectives, pre-test and post-test (see Appendix 4).

7. Course Distribution

7.1 Course material is currently packed at the central headquarters and distribution is based on the regional centres. Packaging and distribution will eventually be a warehouse based operation. Students collect their material from the regional centres - postal services are insufficiently reliable. Delivery of materials to the local centres is by road.

8. Student Admission, Registration Records

8.1 As discussed above (2.3) admission is currently open only to applicants qualified by possession of the Secondary School Leaving Certificate.

8.2 Registration procedures for the intake to the first Introductory Course took place at a number of specified local centres. Both pre-inscribed and so-called 'open entry' students were required to attend a centre for registration.

8.3 Initial intake into the first Introductory Course was between 17,000 and 18,000.

9. Student Support

9.1 It is UNA's current plan to establish a full network of 24 local centres (CLEADs). These will be linked to the national centre (CEAD) via six regional centres (CREADs). The functions of the regional centres are intended to be entirely administrative - to assist communications - students will attend CLEADs only. Initially CLEADs will be established at major population centres. According to demand the centre will be one of three types - varying according to levels of equipment, etc. With the expansion of coverage, centres planned as suitable for large sparcely populated areas will be added to the network. (Appendix 5)

9.2 CLEADs are primarily seen as library and resource centres, and centres for face-to-face tuition and counselling. All students are assigned to counsellors and academic tutors. Great emphasis is laid on providing assistance in overcoming study problems, within the written materials and also by means of meetings or telephone conversations with tutors.

9.3 In addition to support from CLEADs, UNA intends to make arrangements for its students to use experimental and learning facilities at other academic institutions and also within industry.

9.4 Frequent reference is made in UNA literature to remedial materials and activities; the intention appears to be to provide a range of remedial materials in addition to guiding students towards existing explanatory materials.

10. Assessment and Examinations

10.1 Formal assessment by unseen examination, as distinct from self-assessment, will take place at regular intervals during each semester. Assessment will be closely linked to course modules and units, and will, as far as feasible, be by computer-marked objective testing.

10.2 The Introductory Course will have only one formal examination, but it appears to be the intention to have two or more examinations for each semester part in General Studies.

11. Administration and Organisation

11.1 UNA's formal management structure is outlined in the management structure diagram (Appendix 6).

11.2 The university's highest policy authority is the Consejo Superior (Higher Council). This consists of the President and Rector and representatives of a number of educational, governmental, public and national organizations. The overall function of the Consejo Superior is to decide on UNA's policies and objectives, but specifically;

(a) to define UNA's courses and educational programme

(b) to co-ordinate and approve general studies of UNA's methodology and programmes

(c) to define UNA's international policies

(d) to propose candidates for Presidential and Rectoral Office to the National Universities Council (CNU).

11.3 Reporting directly to the Consejo Superior are the two offices of Budgetary Control, and Institutional Planning and Evaluation. The first of these, the Contraloria Interna, supervises the institution's budgetting and reports directly to government as well as to the Consejo Superior. The office of Institutional Planning and Evaluation (Planificacion) is broadly briefed to carry out research into the university's programmes and operations at the highest level. The very important function of institutional evaluation will reside with this unit.

11.4 Also reporting to the Consejo Superior is the Consejo Directivo, or Directive Council. Broadly, The Directive Council is charged with the task of supervising the execution of the policies and objectives laid down for the institution by the Higher tountil. It is an internal board of management, with the Rector as Chairman and managing director, and is the highest administrative authority. Other members of the Directive Council include:

(a) the three vice-rectors in charge of operations, administration and the academic area respectively

(b) director of the unit for Institutional Planning and evaluation

(c) director of the Instituto de Innovaciones Educativas (Institute for Educational Research)

(d) a number of advisory members drawn from the administration.

11.5 Reporting via the Rectorate to the Directive Council are six operational units, which between them are responsible for the detailed planning and execution of the UNA system.

11.6 From left to right of the management structure diagram, the first operational unit is the Centro de Programacion (Project Planning Unit). This has three subunits:

(a) Budgetting subunit, which monitors resource allocation and expenditure against each development programme.

(b) Organization and Methods (O and M) subunit, which investigates and proposes methologies for operational functions

(c) Project Planning and Control subunit, which develops and monitors plans for operations in all areas.

Overall, then, the Project Planning Unit has the functions of developing, co-ordinating and controling plans for operational activities.

11.7 Next we come to the Centro de Informacion Integrada, which we will translate as the Information Centre. The Centre is intended to provide a general service for the collection, recording, collation and dissemination of information throughout the University. It has four subunits:

(a) Resources Centre, which is basically a centre around which learning and teaching resources are organized, both at the national centre level and local centre level.

(b) Communications subunit, responsible for the provision of internal telephone and telex facilities throughout the organization.

(c) Student Records Unit, responsible for the creation and maintenance of administrative student records and student assessment procedures, and also for the provision of student based statistical tables.

(d) Data Processing Unit, responsible for the operation of computer based systems.

11.8 The Vice-Rector for Administration is in charge of the day to day administration of the national centre in Caracas. This divides into:

(a) The Secretariat, which provides support services for the Higher and Directive Councils and the Rectorate.

(b) House Services, providing general support and maintenance services for facilities and equipment.

(c) Personnel subunit; recruitment, training and salaries.

(d) Budgetary Control - while Programacion allocates budgets, this unit is responsible for the actual administration of each budget.

11.9 The Vice Rector Academic is responsible for the execution of academic policy, broadly course creation and academic support services such as the provision of tutors and counsellors and the realization of assessment policies. Specific functions include:

(a) Academic Design Unit: designs the curriculum for each course, and the instructional modules. It also specifies the use of media and the design of broadcast material.

(b) Course Selection Unit (areas Academicas y Carreras): this unit makes strategic decisions on which courses and careers to develop in respect of university policy and national requirements and preparedness.

(c) University Extension: this unit will develop a programme for the provision of a continuing education service in due course.

(d) Student Services unit: supervises student counselling services and general and financial assistance.

(e) Regional Academic Supervision unit: primarily for the selection, training and supervision of course tutors.

11.10 The responsibilities of the Vice Rector for Operations are the production and distribution of learning materials. The functions of the operations area are as follows:

(a) The execution of plans for the development of learning teaching materials, including printed texts, broadcast material, audio-visual teaching aids and home experiment kits.

(b) The monitoring of production costs and quality.

(c) The awarding of contracts to external agencies and the supervision of their work.

(d) The administration, via CEAD, of the regional network of local and regional centres.

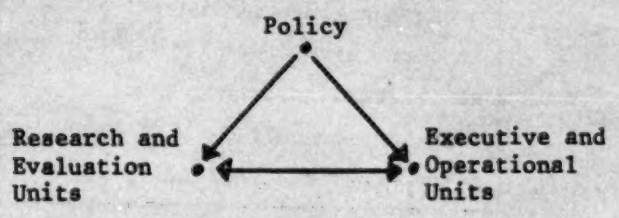
(e) The administration of materials production, storage and distribution, including warehousing and the distribution of materials via the regional network.

11.11 The Institute for Educational Research (Instituto de Innovaciones Educativas) is concerned with learning research and psychometrics primarily, but it has also done some work on predicting student numbers.

12. Control

12.1 It appears to have been the intention of UNA's planners, that the Centro de Informacion Integrada should grow into a management information centre, and thus provide a focus for the control of information resources.

12.2 Greatly simplified, the chief information channels within UNA could be seen as a triangle, as follows:



with CII positioned somewhere along the biderctional flowline.

12.3 In common with most new organizations of this size, UNA is experiencing problems with its information flows, and these are currently being investigated.

13. Resources

13.1 To create and operate the UNA system requires increasing numbers of high calibre managers and technological specialists. If it were easy to recruit such staff, UNA would probably be unnecessary - or, at least, it would be directed towards very different objectives. UNA is therefore obliged to buy expertise in a very competitive market, and must obtain supplies of equipment and knowhow from abroad. Technology transfer, even between developed countries, is not without its problems, and UNA at present has the burden of implementing its policies with technologies whose implications and potentialities are often appreciated too late.

13.2 UNA's budget for 1978 was 76 million bolivars. The following table indicates the salient budgetary heads:

Table 9. UNA 1978 initial budget by spending units

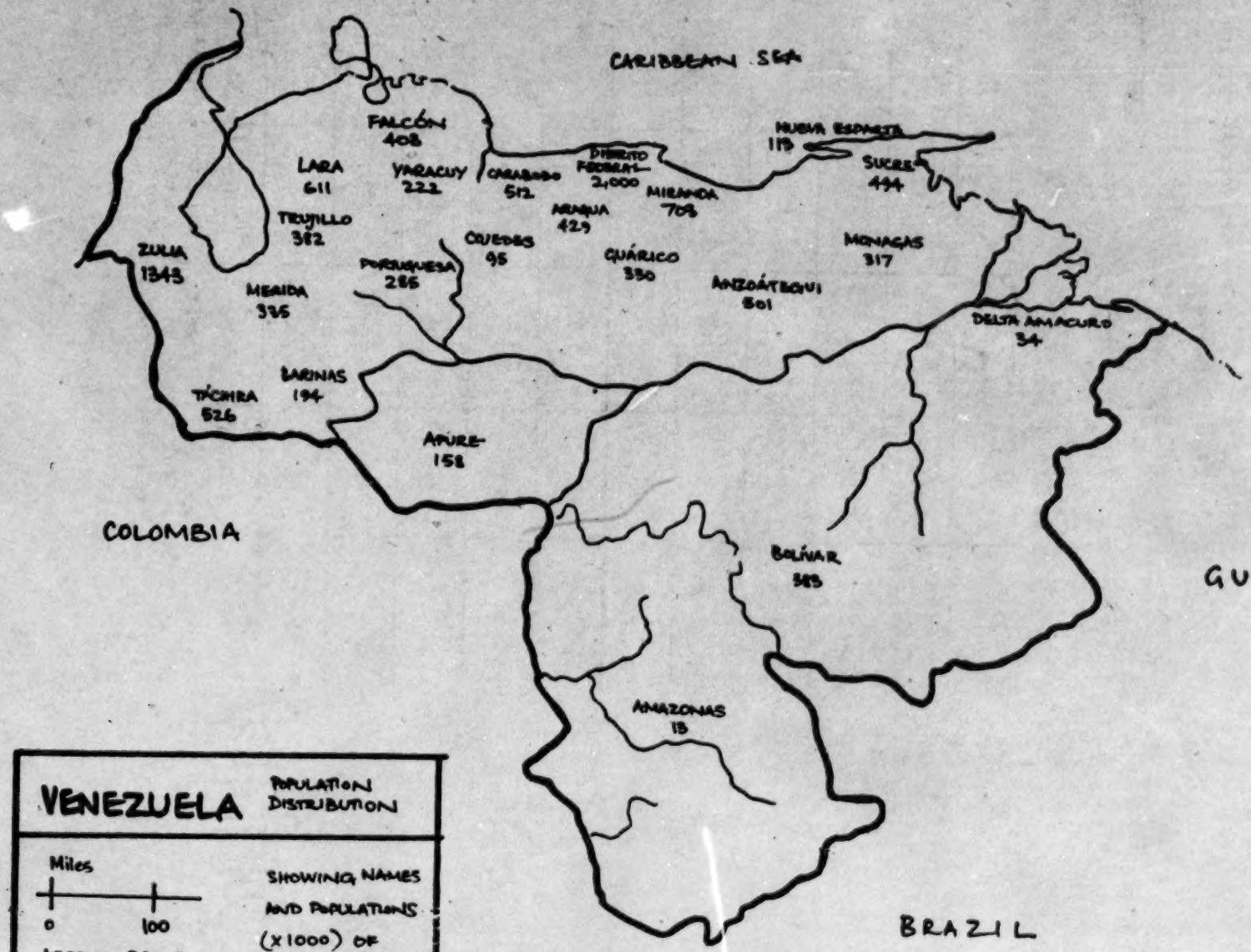
Programme	Bs x 1,000
academic area	16,054
operations area	34,357
research	2,225
management information (CII)	10,307
support units	2,234
administration area	6,536
programacion unit	1,173
other programmes and units	3,114
total budget	76,000

11.3 The following table shows the expected sources of the budgeted revenue:

Table 10. Sources of revenue, 1978

	Bs x 1,000
Subvention from the National Executive	60,000
Student fees: registration fees	1,000
sale of printed materials	3,000
Surplus from 1977 budget	12,000
	76,000

For tables 9 and 10; $1 (US) = 4.4 Bs £1 = 8.7 Bs



VENEZUELA POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Miles
0 100
APPROX. SCALE

SHOWING NAMES AND POPULATIONS (x1000) OF THE 23 STATES

UNA case study 2

APPENDIX 1

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

UNA Case study

APPENDIX 2

Semester/credit structure

Year	Semester	Studies	Credits in GS	Credits in PS	
1	1	GS1	15		
	2	GS2	15		
2	3	PP1		15	
	4	PP2	3	12	
3	5	P1		15	
	6	P2	3	12	
4	7	P3		15	
	8	P4	3	12	
5	9	P5		15	
	10	P6		15	
		10 Semesters of study	39 Credits in GS	111 Credits in PS	150 to graduate

UNA case study

APPENDIX 3

GENERAL STUDIES COURSES

Las asignaturas contempladas en el primer período son:

PRIMER SEMESTRE

CODIGO	CURSO	CREDITOS
13313	LENGUAJE Y COMUNICACION I	3
10113	MATEMATICA I	3
11113	LOGICA	3
16313	CIENCIAS DEL HOMBRE	3
14312	INGLES I	2
15311	TECNICAS DE DOCUMENTACION E INVESTIGACION I	1

SEGUNDO SEMESTRE

CODIGO	CURSO	CREDITOS
13323	LENGUAJE Y COMUNICACION II	3
10123	MATEMATICA II	3
12123	FISICA GENERAL	3
16323	DESARROLLO SOCIAL	3
14322	INGLES II	2
15321	TECNICAS DE DOCUMENTACION E INVESTIGACION II	1

En su segundo período, a lo largo de los Estudios Profesionales, los Estudios Generales ofrecen las siguientes asignaturas:

CUARTO SEMESTRE

CODIGO	CURSO	CREDITOS
26343	DESARROLLO DE LA CIENCIA Y LA TECNOLOGIA	3

SEXTO SEMESTRE

CODIGO	CURSO	CREDITOS
36363	SOCIEDAD, CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGIA EN VENEZUELA	3

OCTAVO SEMESTRE

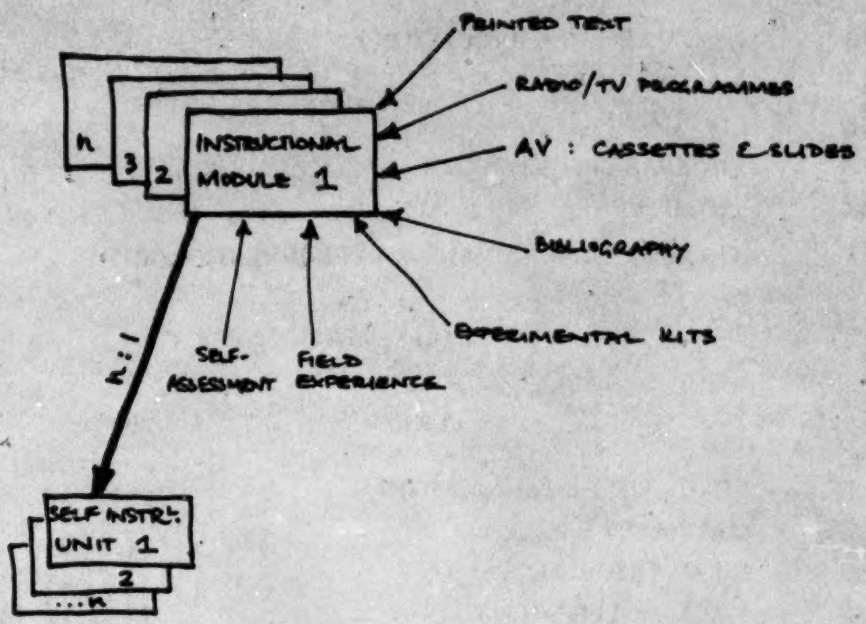
CODIGO	CURSO	CREDITOS
46383	DESARROLLO DEL HOMBRE	3

UNA CASE STUDY

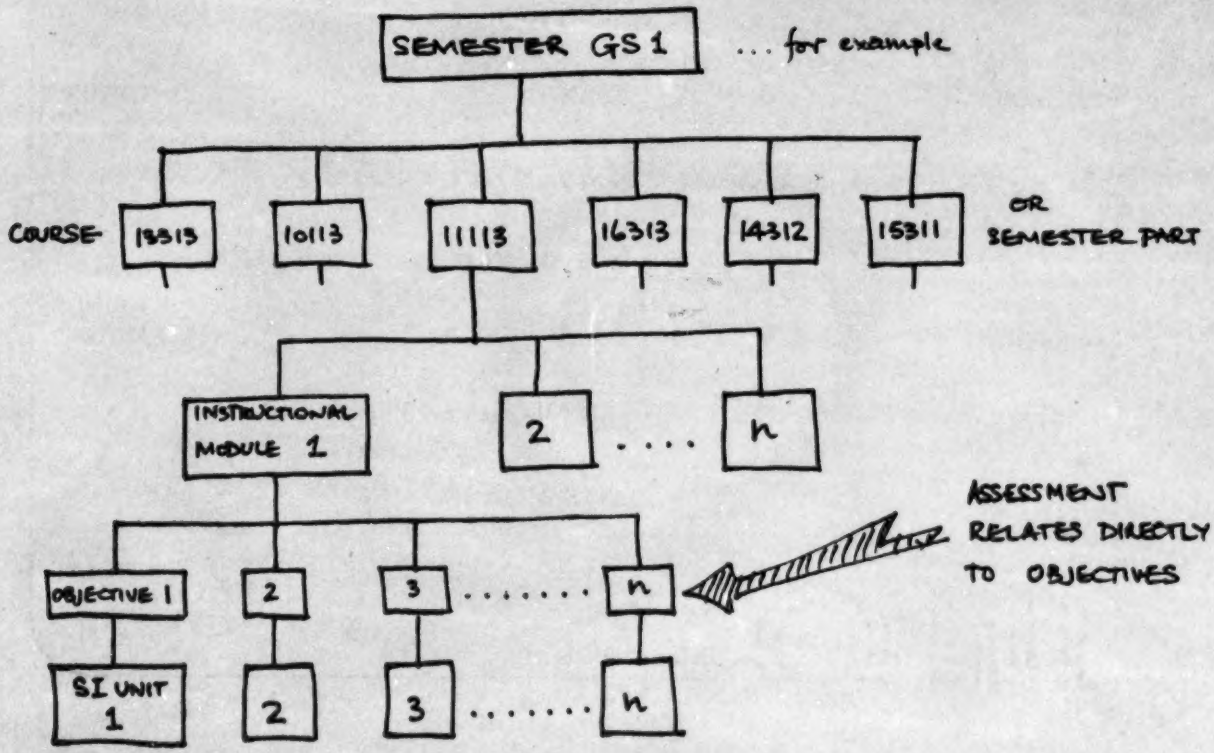
APPENDIX 4

COURSES, SEMESTERS MODULES AND UNITS

AN UNA COURSE



AN UNA SEMESTER



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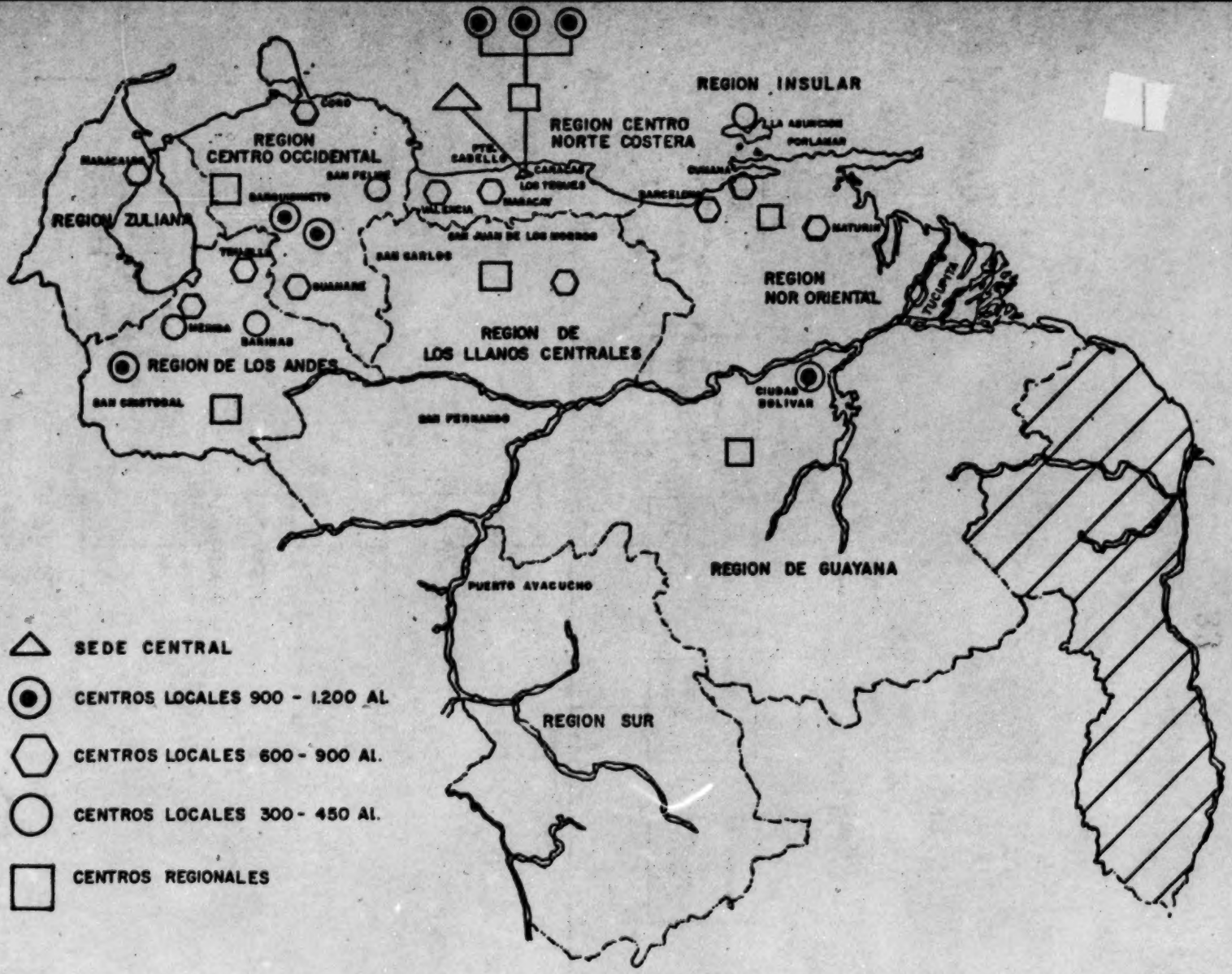
APPENDIX 5

PROPOSED REGIONAL NETWORK



31

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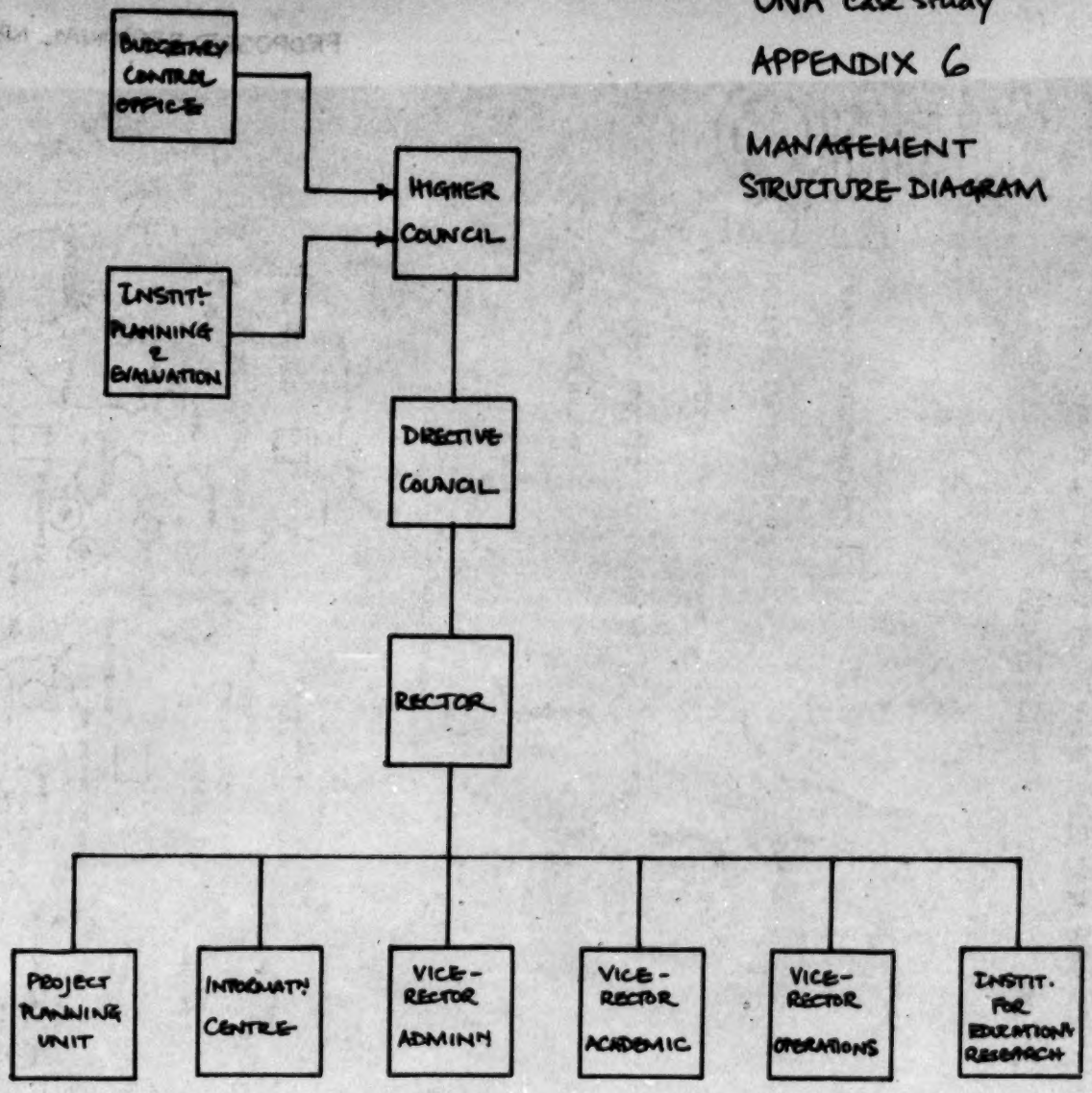
UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL ABIERTA

UBICACION GEOGRAFICA DE LA RED DE CENTROS REGIONALES Y LOCALES 1978-81

UNA case study

APPENDIX 6

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE DIAGRAM



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